



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE STUDY OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH A ZOONYM COMPONENT

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Abstract: *This article is devoted to the theoretical foundations of the study of phraseological units with a zoonym component. It systematically examines the current state of research on these linguistic units in both world linguistics and Uzbek linguistics, as well as their semantic, linguocultural, structural, and comparative characteristics.*

Keywords: *zoonym, zoo-lexeme, zoonymic phraseology, metaphor, cultural symbolism, linguistic worldview, Uzbek, Russian, English.*

INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistics, phraseology is interpreted as a linguistic system that preserves the national and cultural memory of a language and reflects the historical experience as well as the evaluative standards of a society. Phraseological units are characterized by such essential features as stability, reproducibility, semantic integrity, and figurative meaning. Phraseological units with a zoonym component are expressions that contain the name of an animal as one of their elements but acquire a figurative meaning when used as a whole unit. In such expressions, the animal name moves away from its denotative meaning and becomes a metaphorical image representing a person's character, behavior, psychological state, social position, or evaluative attitude toward certain events or phenomena.

In world linguistics, this particular feature has made zoonymic phraseological units an important object of study at the intersection of several linguistic disciplines, including semantics, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, comparative typology, and translation studies.

The development of phraseological theory owes much to the contributions of Russian and European linguists. V.V. Vinogradov classified phraseological units according to the degree of semantic cohesion between their components, paying special attention to how much of the original lexical meaning of each element is preserved. A.V. Kunin, on the other hand, systematized English phraseology on the basis of functional, semantic, and structural criteria. These theoretical frameworks later made it possible to analyze phraseological units containing zoonyms as a separate microsystem within the phraseological structure of language.

In contemporary research, phraseological expressions containing animal names are considered not only as ready-made linguistic units but also as carriers of national stereotypes, conceptual metaphors, and ethnocultural codes.

One of the most prominent directions in the study of zoonymic phraseological units in world linguistics is semantic analysis. In such studies, scholars investigate the



figurative potential of animal names, their evaluative semantic features, and their associative fields. For example, the wolf is often associated with aggression, greed, and danger; the fox symbolizes cunning and хитрость; the sheep or lamb represents obedience and harmlessness; while the donkey is commonly associated with stubbornness or hard labor.

However, these semantic associations are not identical in all languages. In English, the component dog may symbolize loyalty in some expressions, while in others it denotes humiliation or hardship. In Uzbek, however, the component it (“dog”) generally carries a stronger negative connotation. Thus, the semantic potential of zoonyms demonstrates an interaction between universal and culture-specific meanings.

Another important research direction is the linguocultural approach, which examines phraseological units with zoonym components in relation to a people's worldview, lifestyle, and historical experience. According to this perspective, phraseological imagery does not arise randomly; rather, it develops from the society's interaction with the natural environment and the animal world, as well as from its economic practices, religious beliefs, and moral values.

Among societies where animal husbandry has historically played a significant role, phraseological units involving animals such as horses, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, and dogs are particularly frequent. In contrast, communities with strong maritime or hunting traditions may develop different zoomorphic metaphors. Therefore, zoonymic phraseological units serve as valuable linguistic material for reconstructing the linguistic worldview of a particular culture.

Research within the framework of cognitive linguistics interprets animal-based phraseological expressions as manifestations of conceptual metaphors. According to this approach, humans use their knowledge and experience of animals as cognitive models for understanding human behavior and social relations. For instance, a cowardly person may be compared to a rabbit, a cunning individual to a fox, a proud person to a peacock, and a hardworking individual to a bee.

Studies in cognitive linguistics have shown that such metaphors reflect deeply rooted cultural stereotypes and cognitive patterns that influence how people conceptualize reality.

The structural-semantic approach focuses on the grammatical structure, modeling, and internal organization of phraseological units with zoonym components. Within this framework, phraseological expressions are classified according to their grammatical patterns, such as nominal, verbal, adjectival, predicative, or proverbial constructions.

For example, English expressions like “as stubborn as a mule,” “wolf in sheep's clothing,” and “dark horse” can be compared with Uzbek phraseological units such as “bo'ridan qo'rqib o'rmonga kirmaslik,” “it azobi,” “eshakday ishlamoq,” and “tulkiday



ayyor." Although their structural forms differ, they share similar mechanisms of imagery creation and evaluative meaning.

Comparative and typological studies also play a significant role in world linguistics. Researchers compare phraseological systems across languages in order to determine the balance between universal and culture-specific features. In many cases, certain animal symbols appear across multiple languages with similar meanings. However, other animal images are unique to particular cultures due to differences in historical experience, cultural traditions, and social values.

From the perspective of translation studies, phraseological units with zoonym components are considered particularly challenging. Their figurative, emotional, and cultural meanings often make literal translation impossible. Therefore, scholars recommend translation strategies such as functional equivalence, descriptive translation, or substitution of imagery in order to preserve the communicative effect of the original expression.

In recent years, researchers have also begun to explore the pragmatic and discourse-related aspects of zoonymic phraseological units. These studies examine how such expressions function in communication to convey irony, criticism, praise, warning, or emotional evaluation. Analyses of literary texts, journalistic materials, proverbs, and everyday speech demonstrate that phraseological units with zoonym components significantly enhance the expressive power of language.

Furthermore, the development of digital linguistics and corpus-based methods has opened new opportunities for studying phraseological units. Electronic language corpora enable scholars to analyze the frequency, contextual variation, stylistic distribution, and semantic shifts of zoonymic expressions across different genres and discourse types. Thus, the study of phraseological units with zoonym components in world linguistics has evolved into a multidisciplinary research field that integrates semantic, cognitive, cultural, pragmatic, and translation-oriented perspectives.

In Uzbek linguistics, the systematic study of phraseology began to develop actively in the second half of the twentieth century. During this period, significant progress was made in describing, classifying, and lexicographically documenting the national phraseological fund.

Among the scholars who made substantial contributions to the development of Uzbek phraseology, Sh. Rahmatullayev occupies a special place. His research, particularly the compilation of explanatory phraseological dictionaries, laid a solid theoretical foundation for the study of phraseological units, including their structural stability, figurative meaning, and functional characteristics.

Later, the works of scholars such as A. Mamatov, B. Yo'ldoshev, and S. Mirzaqulov further expanded the scope of phraseological studies by examining semantic, stylistic, and linguopoetic aspects of phraseological units.

Initially, phraseological units containing zoonyms were studied within the broader framework of Uzbek phraseology and were not treated as an independent



research object. However, over time, scholars recognized that expressions containing animal names constitute one of the most active, figurative, and culturally significant layers of the phraseological system. As a result, they gradually became the subject of specialized research.

In Uzbek phraseology, zoonymic expressions often function as metaphorical representations of human character and behavior. Animal names such as bo'ri (wolf), tulki (fox), it (dog), ot (horse), eshak (donkey), mushuk (cat), quyon (rabbit), ilon (snake), and qo'y (sheep) are among the most productive components in phraseological expressions. For example, the wolf may symbolize courage or danger; the fox represents cunning; the dog may express suffering or humiliation; the horse symbolizes strength and endurance; and the donkey often represents stubbornness or hard work. It should be noted that the meanings associated with these animal images are not always fixed. Depending on the communicative context, they may acquire different connotative shades.

Another important direction in Uzbek linguistics is the linguocultural analysis of phraseological units with zoonym components. Because Uzbek culture historically developed in close connection with agriculture and animal husbandry, animals have played a significant role in shaping cultural perceptions and linguistic imagery. The symbolic meanings associated with animals such as horses, wolves, dogs, and foxes reflect centuries of cultural experience and collective observations of animal behavior. In addition to semantic and cultural analysis, Uzbek scholars have also explored the linguopoetic functions of zoonymic phraseological units. In literary discourse, such expressions contribute to character portrayal, emotional expressiveness, irony, and the creation of national color.

Recent comparative studies have also examined similarities and differences between Uzbek and other languages. These studies reveal that some animal images carry similar meanings across languages, while others reflect unique cultural associations.

Translation studies have also addressed the challenges of rendering zoonymic phraseological units from Uzbek into other languages. Scholars emphasize that the translator must preserve not only the literal meaning but also the emotional, stylistic, and cultural connotations of the original expression.

Conclusions

Overall, research in Uzbek linguistics demonstrates that phraseological units with zoonym components constitute an important part of the national linguistic and cultural heritage. If we conclude the article in several points: phraseological units with a zoonym component represent one of the most expressive and culturally significant layers of phraseology; in world linguistics these units are studied from various theoretical perspectives, including semantic, structural, cognitive, linguocultural, pragmatic, and translation-oriented approaches; Uzbek linguistics has developed a strong theoretical foundation in phraseological studies, which has facilitated the



investigation of zoonymic phraseological expressions as a distinct research field; comparative studies demonstrate that zoonymic phraseological units combine both universal and culture-specific elements. And finally, further research should focus on corpus-based analysis, discourse studies, and cognitive modeling in order to gain a deeper understanding of the functioning of zoonymic phraseological units in modern language use.

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